

Bridging the sustainability paradox: a comprehensive framework of customer perceived value for slow fashion purchase intention

¹Shrithika G U, ²Dr. N. Maria Joseph

¹Research Scholar, ²Assistant Professor, and Research Guide

^{1,2}PG and Research Department of Commerce

^{1,2}Loyola College (Autonomous), Chennai, India

¹25dco003@loyolacollege.edu, ²profmariajoseph@gmail.com

Abstract—The environmental impact of the fast fashion industry is substantial, primarily due to the excessive waste generated from the frequent disposal of clothing by consumers. Although consumers increasingly express awareness of and support for slow fashion, this positive attitude does not consistently translate into actual purchase behaviour. This conceptual paper delves into the comprehensive framework of perceived value by integrating both values and sacrifices within a formative second-order and reflective first-order model, wherein attitude mediates the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention. This approach avoids the tautological limitations of the simple “give-get” models by conceptualising value dimensions as an integral part of the perceived value rather than independent predictors. The value dimensions included in the model are functional value, emotional value, social value, green value and aesthetic value. Extending prior research, this study included non-monetary cost and green perceived risk, along with monetary cost, offering a novel perspective in the context of perceived value of slow fashion purchase intention. This study proposes a framework that conceptualises the “give-get” mental trade-off process of consumers, explaining how value-sacrifice evaluations form perceived value, which in turn influences attitudes and purchase intentions towards slow fashion. This conceptual framework contributes to the sustainable consumption literature by integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour and the Theory of Consumption Values to offer a detailed explanation of slow fashion purchase intention.

Index Terms—perceived value; non-monetary cost; green perceived risk; slow fashion; purchase intention

I. Introduction

The fast fashion industry is moving towards environmental catastrophe due to increasing consumption (Kim et al., 2021). According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017), clothing production has doubled since 2000, while average lifespan of clothing has reduced by 36 percent. The fast fashion industry is responsible for significant environmental pollution, accounting for 92 million tonnes of textile waste annually and it causes 8-10 percent of the global CO₂ emissions (Niinimäki et al., 2020).

To address these issues, slow fashion has emerged as an alternative movement within the fashion industry, it represents a systems-level change that rejects the continual economic growth model of fast fashion industry. Instead, it emphasises local and small-scale production, blending traditional craft techniques with local materials and markets, thereby promoting diversity (Kate Fletcher, 2010). These developments necessitate a change in consumer behaviour in fashion, and it is the need of the hour for

consumers to prefer eco-friendly and slow fashion clothing to safeguard the environment for future generations and support social justice.

Despite increased awareness and positive attitudes towards the slow fashion clothing, it is not often reflected in actual purchasing behaviour of the consumers which is due to premium pricing, concerns regarding performance and longevity, mental barriers related to style and social expression and perceived social risks associated with the peer perceptions discourage consumers from purchasing sustainable products signifying attitude-behaviour gap in sustainable apparel (Connell & Kozar, 2014).

Consumers engage in purchasing behaviour to obtain value from products and services (Mittal & Sheth, 2001). Hence, understanding which consumption values motivate consumers to purchase is important for businesses. Perceived value has been defined as an overall evaluation of the utility of products or services based on the perception of what is received and given, essentially quality and price (Zeithaml, 1988). Similarly, the theory of consumption values proposes that functional, emotional, social, conditional and epistemic values influence consumers' purchasing behaviour (Sheth et al., 1991).

Prior research in the sustainable and slow fashion contexts focussed predominantly on the monetary costs, overlooking other important sacrifices in the sustainable consumption. For instance, Arora and Manchanda (2022) focused only on monetary cost. Addressing this gap, the present study incorporated non-monetary costs and green perceived risks in addition to monetary costs in the "give" components of perceived value. This study is one of the few to conceptualise perceived value as a formative second-order and reflective first-order construct that integrates both "give" and "get" components to capture the consumer's holistic trade-off evaluation in slow fashion purchase intention.

This study develops a comprehensive framework of perceived value of slow fashion purchase intention by integrating the theory of planned behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and theory of consumption values (Sheth et al., 1991). This framework conceptualises consumers' evaluation through "get" components such as functional, emotional, social, green and aesthetic values and through "give" components such as monetary costs, non-monetary costs and green perceived risks. These components collectively form the higher-order construct of perceived value that captures consumer's complex mental trade-off process, shaping their attitudes, which in turn influence their slow fashion purchase intention.

II. Literature review and Hypothesis development

2.1 Functional value

Functional value refers to the utility derived from a product's physical performance and functional attributes (Sheth et al., 1991). Sweeny and Soutar (2001) sub-divided the functional value into price and quality dimensions. In this study, price is not included in the functional value and dealt it as separate component to better capture consumer's evaluation of product performance. Within the slow fashion context, consumers value quality, durability, classic designs and performance. Green products should have better product functionality to compete with conventional alternatives (Juliana et al., 2020). The use of

organic, recycled and environmentally friendly materials in the clothing improves the perceived value and lead to increased purchase intention (Dangelico et al., 2022). Such materials contribute directly to functional benefits including comfort, health, longevity and wearability. Although sustainable clothing is often priced higher, consumers frequently perceive it as value for money due to its extended lifespan, wearability, classic cuts and using of natural materials which leads them to buy less where initial extra cost is overcome by using it for longer time (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). Consequently, consumers adopt sustainable apparel not only for the environmental benefits but also for practical benefits it offers such as health and convenience (Ngo et al., 2024). Functional value has been identified as a significant dimension of perceived value and plays an important role in shaping consumers' purchase intention (Wu and Lee, 2025). Additionally, perceived quality has been consistently identified as a key driver of sustainable purchasing behaviour as study by Arora and Manchanda (2022) and Wasaya et al. (2021) demonstrate that quality-related judgements influence consumer's preference for sustainable options. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed:

H1: Functional value positively forms the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.2 Emotional value

Emotional value refers to the ability of the products to arouse feelings and affective states that persist throughout the consumption experience (Sheth et al., 1991). In the apparel context, clothing functions not only as a utilitarian product but also as a means of self-expression and confidence enhancement. As a result, emotional considerations strongly influence slow fashion related purchase decisions. Prior studies indicate that consumers derive psychological benefits such as self-esteem, self-expression, pride, joy and moral fulfilment and satisfaction when purchasing environmentally responsible clothing as opposed to conventional alternatives (Jia et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021). At the same time, sustainable choices help mitigate negative emotion such as guilt associated with environmental degradation and labour exploitation (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). These positive and negative emotions influence the consumer's overall judgement of the slow fashion products and improves the perceived value. Empirical studies further support the significance of emotional value. Kim et al., (2021) demonstrates that emotional value has the significant influence on the purchase attitudes than functional and social value. Similarly, Woo and Kim (2019), and Arora and Manchanda (2022) identify emotional value is the significant determinant of the green perceived value. Based on this, the following hypothesis is formulated:

H2: Emotional value positively forms the second-order construct of perceived value

2.3 Social value

Social value refers to the utility derived from a product's ability to enhance one's social life (Peng & Liang, 2013). According to the Consumption values theory, social value plays a significant role in the highly visible products such as clothing as it enhances the social image and strengthens group affiliation (Sheth et

al., 1991). Word-of-mouth from valued social groups significantly shapes consumers' purchase decisions, as individuals seek social approval and belongingness. In the context of sustainable fashion, social influences play an important role in influencing the purchasing behaviour. Past research indicates that recommendations and word-of-mouth from family and peers foster favourable attitudes and stronger purchase intentions toward sustainable clothing (Ngo et al., 2024; Okur et al., 2023). At the same time, evidence suggests that sustainable consumers are not solely driven by external motivations such as social acceptance and belongingness but also by intrinsic motives related to personal values and self-identity (Lundblad & Davies, 2016). These findings indicate that social value operates alongside internal motivations which influences the consumers judgements towards sustainable products. When slow fashion products satisfy both social value and personal identity needs, consumers are likely to perceive greater overall value and stronger purchase intention. Empirical study further supports this relationship, with Chi (2015) identifying social value as a significant determinant of perceived value in green clothing. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Social value positively forms the second-order construct of perceived value

2.4 Aesthetic value

Aesthetic value refers to psychological satisfaction derived from the visual and sensory appeal of a product. Aesthetic benefits constitute one of the eight categories within Lai's (1995) typology of generic product benefits, reflecting the pleasure and personal expression consumers obtain from a product's beauty. In fashion context, aesthetic value strongly influences the purchase decisions, as consumers are attracted to unique craftsmanship, timeless designs and products that blend modernity with tradition. Past research further indicates that consumers are unwilling to sacrifice aesthetics and functionality for the environmental benefits alone instead favourable attitude towards slow fashion emerges when sustainability is integrated as a value-added component alongside visually appealing designs and functionality (Ngo et al., 2024; Schiaroli et al., 2024). Likewise, evidence suggests that eco-friendly designs that are minimalistic, fashionable and aesthetically appealing cause positive product and environmental attitude (Merwe, 2013; Ngo et al., 2024). Based on these findings, aesthetic designs enhance the consumers' positive product evaluation and strengthens the perceived value in sustainable clothing. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H4: Aesthetic value positively forms the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.5 Green Value

Green value refers to the perceived environmental benefits derived from purchasing slow fashion products and to the extent it can reduce the negative impacts on the environment. In the context of fashion industry, sustainability emerged as a response to the negative environmental and social impacts. Despite low awareness on sustainability in apparels sector compared to others, a growing number of consumers

demonstrate environmental concern and preference for slow fashion alternatives. Past research indicates that environmental concern fosters positive attitude and purchase intention towards green products, including sustainable clothing, as these options are perceived to reduce the environmental harm (Ahmed et al., 2023; Leclercq-Machado et al., 2022; Ngo et al., 2024). In the context of sustainable clothing, environmentally responsible consumers seek clothing with tangible attributes like recyclability and longevity, eco-friendly materials, sustainable production techniques and are more inclined to consider second-hand and recycled clothing to reduce wastes (Lundblad & Davies, 2016; Ngo et al., 2024). However, evidence suggests that, hedonic values outweigh environmental value when consumers make fashion choices (Geiger & Keller, 2017), indicating that consumers purchase for emotional and aesthetic value not only for environmental benefits. This highlights the need for balancing eco-friendly attributes, functional and aesthetic benefits to enhance the overall attractiveness of slow fashion even for consumers with weaker biospheric values. Nevertheless, green value acts as a significant predictor of sustainable purchasing behaviour especially for recycled and second-hand clothing but not for upcycled clothing (Kim et al., 2021) which signifies that its influence may vary across different product types. Empirical results further demonstrates that green value exerts a strong influence on the purchase intention of green apparel compared to other value dimensions such as emotional, conditional value, functional value, social value and epistemic value (Bielawska & Grebosz-Krawczyk, 2021). Collectively, these findings suggest that environmental benefits shape consumer's favourable evaluation and perceived value of slow fashion. Therefore, it is hypothesized that:

H5: Green value positively forms the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.6 Monetary cost

Monetary cost represents the primary "sacrifice" component in the perceived value framework and plays a critical role in the consumer's product evaluation. Monetary price not only influences the perceived value and purchase intention but also shapes perceptions of non-monetary costs. Past research suggests that when consumers perceive prices to be fair or reasonable, they evaluate associated time and effort costs more favourably (Duman et al., 2006). Despite having positive attitudes towards the sustainable fashion, purchasing behaviour remains low due to the consumer's reluctance to pay higher prices (Skinner et al., 2021; Wiederhold & Martinez, 2018). Premium prices may also generate psychological stress when consumers are unable to align their consumption with pro-environmental values (Shao & Lin, 2024). Moreover, evidence suggests that purchasing behaviour improves when sustainable clothing achieves price-parity with the conventional clothing (Scridon et al., 2025). However, consumers are willing to pay premium price when perceived value and benefits outweigh monetary sacrifice (Arora & Manchanda, 2022; Ngo et al., 2024). Therefore, premium prices generally reduce perceived value of slow fashion clothing unless it offers superior functional, aesthetics and environmental benefits relative to conventional clothing to justify the higher price. Accordingly, following hypothesis is proposed,

H6: Monetary costs negatively contribute to the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.7 Non-monetary cost

Non-Monetary cost is defined as effort, time and psychological sacrifices consumers incur during the search, evaluation and purchase of the products, it excludes direct monetary cost of a product. Prior research demonstrates that higher non-monetary costs generally reduce perceived value and purchase intention across various industries due to increased search and psychic costs along with inconvenience which reduce the overall attractiveness of the product. Such negative effects have been observed in the contexts such as branded mobile phones (Murillo-Zegarra et al., 2020), leisure travel (Duman et al., 2006) and green packaged beverages (Li & Thanh, 2021). Similarly, within sustainable fashion, people are unwilling to buy slow fashion clothing due to limited variety, inadequate accessibility and restricted size ranges and second-hand clothing due to increased search efforts and inconvenience (Jensen et al., 2025; Skinner et al., 2021). Despite favourable consumer attitudes towards slow fashion, hindrances such as limited availability and lack of transparency limit consumers to purchase.

However, sometimes efforts put in positively influences perceived value and purchase intention. Researching and gaining information about the availability, fabrics and transparency strengthens perceived value as this investment generates internal satisfaction, emotional attachment and a sense of accomplishment to the consumers which is different from the experience of purchasing conventional clothing (Lundblad and Davies, 2016). These findings suggest that voluntary exploration provides psychological benefits while involuntary burden reduces the perceived value. Despite these differential effects, non-monetary costs generally exert negative influence on perceived value especially when it creates barriers to purchase. Hence, it is hypothesised that,

H7: Non-monetary costs negatively contribute to the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.8 Green Perceived risk

Green perceived risk refers to the scepticism of the consumers regarding the environmental performance and actual impact of the product or services. More broadly, perceived risk refers to uncertainty faced by the consumers when making a purchase decision as they cannot fully foresee the purchase outcome and is classified into functional, psychological, physical, financial and time risks (Schiffman & Wisenblit., 2015). Perceived risks generate distrust and hinder consumers from making a purchase decision. Past research suggests that green perceived risks negatively influence the purchase intention of the consumers (Chen, Y.-S. and Chang, 2012; Vijayan & Oo, 2022). Greenwashing contributes to the consumer's confusion and distrust towards firm's green claims, which heightens the perceptions of risk associated with green products (Chen et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2019; Tarabieh, 2021). Likewise, information asymmetry causes green perceived risk as consumers lack all the necessary information before purchasing which further

exacerbates perceived risk (Zhuang et al., 2021). In sustainable fashion specifically, green perceived risks have found to reduce the purchase intention; however, these risks can be mitigated through improved product quality, strengthening the green image, providing complete product information, providing long term value, transparency about the production process and justifying the environmental performance (Gödekmerdan Önder & Çakıroğlu, 2023; Ouyang & Wang, 2025). However, inconsistent finding has been seen in an empirical study, which states that green perceived risk positively influences the purchase intention, which suggest that high eco-conscious consumers tend to accept the green perceived risks due to strong environmental commitment (Juliana et al., 2020). Despite these exceptions, green perceived risk generally lowers the perceived value of the slow fashion clothing. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is developed,

H8: Perceived risks negatively contribute to the second-order construct of perceived value.

2.9 Perceived value, Attitude and Purchase Intention

Customer perceived value is defined as the difference between satisfaction of consumer's expectations and the monetary and non-monetary costs for searching, evaluating, buying, using and disposing of products or services by the prospective consumers which is compared against the alternatives (Kotler & Keller, 2016). It is formed based on the assessment of benefits relative to sacrifices and consumers seek to maximize value while minimizing cost and efforts during purchase decisions. Customer perceived value is shaped by beliefs, needs, experiences and individual traits of the consumers and it is combination of many values which depends on the product category and contextual factors (Jin et al., 2024; Cho et al., 2024).

Prior research consistently indicates that green perceived value positively influences the purchasing behaviour of sustainable products (Chen & Chang, 2012; Yadav & Pathak, 2017). Hence, when consumers perceive that slow fashion products offer superior environmental and personal benefits, purchase likelihood increases. Accordingly, the following hypothesis is proposed,

H9: Perceived value positively influences the purchase intention

Attitude is defined as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour" (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In the context of sustainable fashion, perceived value composed of emotional, social, functional and other value dimensions has been found to influence the attitude (Hoang & Tung, 2024; Lin & Dong, 2023; Ngo et al., 2025).

Perceived value may not directly translate into purchase intention but through satisfaction (Juliana et al., 2020) which signifies that perceived value influences purchase intention only when it generates favourable internal evaluation and emotional response. Consistent with Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991), customers are more likely to engage in purchasing behaviour when they have a positive emotional attitude

towards it. Prior empirical results further show that attitude fully and partially mediates the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention (Arora & Manchanda, 2022; Ngo et al., 2024).

Likewise, positive attitude has an influence on the purchase intention of green products (Chen et al., 2012; Paul et al., 2016). Previous research further suggests that favourable attitude towards the environment have found to influence the purchase intention towards the eco-friendly products (Harjadi & Gunardi, 2022; Hoang & Tung, 2024). Accordingly, the hypotheses are developed,

H10: Perceived value positively influences the attitude of the consumers

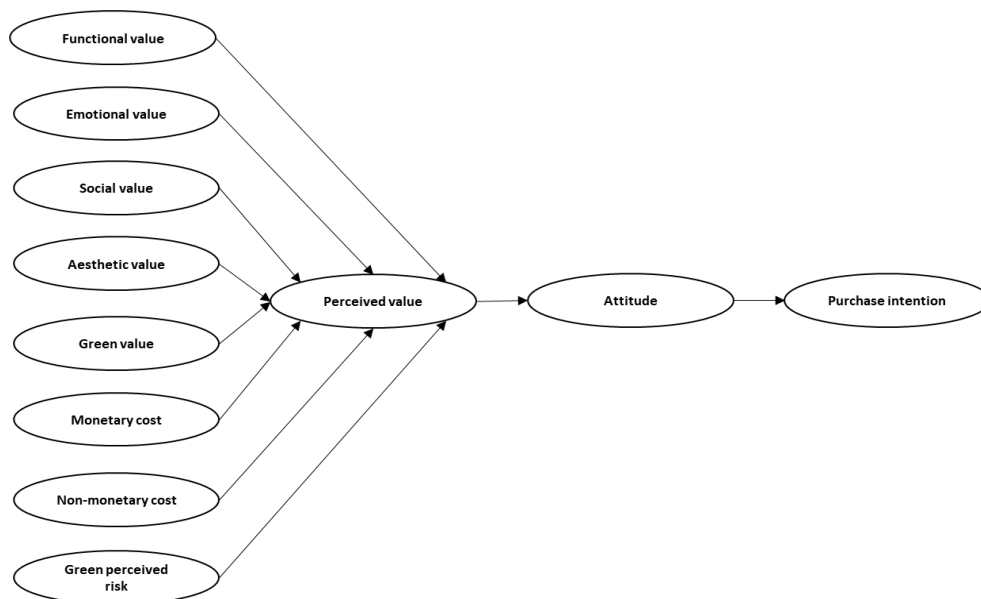
H11: Attitude positively influences the purchase intention

H12: Attitude mediates the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention

III. Conceptualisation of Perceived value

This study conceptualises perceived value as a formative second-order construct composed of multiple reflective first-order dimensions, with attitude mediating the relationship between perceived value and purchase intention. This approach addresses a significant gap identified by Lin et al. (2005) who argued that perceived value should be modelled formatively based on its theoretical definition as an overall trade-off between “give” vs “get” components. He noted that traditional multidimensional models are incomplete because they fail to include the overall abstraction of perceived value and they treat individual “give vs get” components as independent predictors of outcomes such as satisfaction and behavioural intentions. Moreover, without forming an overall value construct, the “give vs get” component’s mental trade-off experience cannot be truly projected then study is conducted at component level and results are concluded at value level. Treating value components as direct predictors of perceived value leads to tautological relationships. Modelling perceived value as a formative second-order construct allows the components to be the integral parts of the perceived value construct, thereby accurately reflecting consumers’ overall assessment.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Perceived Value Dimensions of Slow Fashion Purchase Intention



IV. Discussion

This conceptual framework addresses the sustainability paradox, where consumers' awareness and positive attitudes do not consistently translate into actual purchasing behaviour. By integrating the Theory of Planned Behaviour (Ajzen, 1991) and the Theory of Consumption Values (Sheth et al., 1991), this study provides a framework that helps reduce this purchase gap in slow fashion clothing. It broadens the understanding of perceived value by incorporating additional components such as green and aesthetic values, non-monetary costs and green perceived risks, offering a complete understanding of the consumers' evaluations. This paper frames perceived value as a holistic trade-off process, where it is not the result of a single value but rather a mental assessment of multiple value dimensions weighed against sacrifice components, which further impact purchase intention. Overall, the framework demonstrates that decreasing or avoiding the sacrifice components and increasing the value components improve the perceived value which further increases the purchase intention of the consumers.

V. Implications and Conclusions

From a managerial perspective, firms should produce clothing by using eco-friendly clothing such as organic cotton, bamboo, hemp, while ensuring durability and visual appeal of the clothing. Furthermore, incorporating timeless designs and regional heritage elements in a clothing strengthens the functional and aesthetic appeal. Transparency regarding production process, source of raw materials, labour and green practices is crucial to gain the trust and confidence of the consumers. Marketing messages should emphasize the emotional and social benefits of slow fashion clothing by eliciting the feelings of pride, joy and responsible consumption, while positioning it as socially desirable. The monetary costs charged for the clothing should be justified by the superior value and environmental benefits and also reduce the non-monetary costs by providing complete product information to simplify the purchase process. These strategies enhance the perceived value and strengthen the positive attitude and purchase intention.

This study has contributed to the slow fashion literature by providing a comprehensive perceived value framework of slow fashion purchase intention that addresses the purchase gap. By conceptualising perceived value as formative second-order construct composed of functional, emotional, social, aesthetic and green values along with the monetary, non-monetary costs and green perceived risks, provides complete explanation of the value-sacrifice trade-off process underlying the purchase decisions. Overall, the proposed framework acts as foundation for formulating marketing strategies and future empirical research in the context of slow fashion clothing.

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